

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SECTO 03108 022246Z

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AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTO 03108

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE

1. ON APRIL 2 THE SECRETARY MET FOR 80 MINUTES PRIVATELY AT THE RESIDENCE IN PARIS WITH BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST. VAN ELSLANDE WAS ACCCOMPANIED BY HIS PERSONAL AIDE, VAN BELLINGHEN. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB ALSO ATTENDED.

2. VAN ELSLANDE BEGAN BY ASKING VAN BELLINGHEN TO SUMMARIZE THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S PERCEPTION OF WHAT IS NOW HAPPENING IN ZAIRE. VAN BELLINGHEN GAVE A RESUME OF WHAT HABIB HAD RECEIVED FROM THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY IN BRUSSELS ON MARCH 26. VAN BELLINGHAN STRESSED THE EXTENSIVE IDEOLOGICAL AND MILITARY PREPARATION THAT HAD GONE INTO THE KATANGAN GENDARMES' INVASION OF SHABA PROVINCE. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE KATANGANS ARE NOW INTERESTED IN OVER-THROWING MOBUTU IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A NEW "CONGO" WHICH WOULD BE ALLIGNED WITH THE SOVIETS AND RADICAL AFRICAN STATES. BOTH MOBUTU AND THE KATANGAS WANT THE 27,000 BELGIAN RESIDENTS TO REMAIN IN ZAIRE, ESPECIALLY THE 3000 WHO ARE RUNNING THE COPPER MINING OPERATIONS IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SECTO 03108 022246Z

KOLWEZI. HE ADDED THAT MOBUTU NEEDS TO RECOUP AT LEAST SOME MILITARY INITIATIVE IN SHABA PROVINCE BEFORE DIPLOMATIC OR POLITICAL EFFORTS TO END THE CONFLICT CAN BE SUCCESSFUL. VAN BELLINGHEN DESCRIBED THE UNWILLINGNESS OF THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT TO INTERVENE ACTIVELY ON MOBUTU'S BEHALF, ALTHOUGH THE BELGIANS ARE VERY WILLING TO LET THE FRENCH "DO IT ALONE." HE SUGGESTED THAT THE WEST AGREE TO

DEFER ZAIRE'S DEBTS AND PROVIDE FOOD AID SO THAT MOBUTU CAN USE HIS SCARCE HARD CURRENCY RESERVES TO PURCHASE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. HE ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH EFFORTS BY MOBUTU TO RECRUIT MERCENARIES, ALTHOUGH THE BELGIAN ADVISORS IN ZAIRE WERE PROVIDING ONLY LOGISTICAL ASSISTANCE, NOT MILITARY ADVICE.

3. VAN BELLINGHEN CONCLUDED THAT MOBUTU MIGHT BE WELL ADVISED TO ALLOW SUCH OPPOSITION FIGURES AS GIZENGA AND NDELA TO RETURN TO THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN A BROAD ANTI-MARXIST FRONT.

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY'S QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER MOBUTU COULD SURVIVE WITHOUT SOME FOREIGN TROOPS, VAN ELSLANDE RESPONDED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO HOLD IF THE 4000 KATANGAN GENDARMES PRESENTLY IN ANGOLA JOINED THE 2000 KATANGAN WHO ARE NOW INVOLVED IN THE MILITARY INCURSION IN ZAIRE. THE BELGIANS EXPLAINED THAT MOBUTU'S FORCES ARE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING WELL--LIKE THE KATANGANS--IF ONLY THEY CAN RECEIVE COMPETENT LEADERSHIP. THE SECRETARY MENTIONED THAT GISCARD HAD TOLD HIM THIS MORNING OF HAVING JUST RECEIVED A CALL FROM KING HASSAN, WHO HAD EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO HAVE AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF MOROCCAN "VOLUNTEERS" TO GO TO ZAIRE. GISCARD HAD ALSO MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF VOLUNTEERS GOING FROM OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THERE IS A STRONG CURRENT OF AMERICAN OPINION INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS, AGAINST GIVING OR EVEN SELLING WEAPONS TO ZAIRE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO VAN ELSLANDE'S QUERY ON THE AVAILABILITY OF M-16 AMMUNITION FOR ZAIRE FROM US SOURCES, HABIB SAID

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SECTO 03108 022246Z

THAT THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT THE FAZ HAS ENOUGH AMMUNITION AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT LACKS LEADERSHIP CADRES. VAN ELSLANDE THEN STATED THAT NO MILITARY SOLUTION WAS POSSIBLE IN ZAIRE AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WANTED MOBUTU TO SEEK A POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION. HE DISMISSED THE NIGERIAN MEDIATION EFFORT AS ONE THAT WAS NOT LIKELY TO SUCCEED, SINCE THE NIGERIANS HAD TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN MOBUTU AND NETO FOR THE

END PART ONE

PART TWO

PAST SIX MONTHS. HE DESCRIBED NETO AS A DETERMINED REVOLUTIONARY WHO WAS BEING EGGED ON BY THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS. IF ONLY MOBUTU COULD BE SUSTAINED BY SUFFICIENT MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND CADRES LONG ENOUGH, HE MIGHT WELL BE IN A POSITION TO ENTER INTO POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KATANGANS. VAN ELSLANDE FAVORED HAVING MOBUTU

RELINQUISH A HIGH DEGREE OF POLITICAL POWER TO THE PROVINCES IN ORDER TO DEFUSE REGIONAL RESENTMENT AGAINST HIS OVER-CENTRALIZATION. HE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT A RETURN OF OPPOSITION LEADERS TO ZAIRE WOULD MAKE THE MOBUTU REGIME APPEAR MORE OPEN AND, THEREFORE, MORE DESERVING OF SUPPORT IN THE EYES OF WESTERN PUBLIC OPINIONS.

6. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT NO SHOTS WERE FIRED IN SHABA BECAUSE THE KATANGAN GENDARMES WERE MOVING THROUGH THE AREA WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING ANY FAZ OPPOSITION. HE STATED THAT THE US IS CONCERNED THAT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ZAIRE MAY BE ENDANGERED AND THAT THERE IS A RISK OF DESTABILIZATION THROUGHOUT THIS REGION OF AFRICA. HOWEVER, HE URGED VAN ELSLANDE TO UNDERSTAND THE CONSTRAINTS THAT WERE OPERATING ON US POLICY. ON RETURNING TO WASHINGTON, THE SECRETARY WOULD LOOK INTO WHETHER WE CAN PUT TOGETHER A LIMITED ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 SECTO 03108 022246Z

THAT WAS ACCEPTABLE TO AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THAT WOULD HELP MOBUTU TO SURVIVE UNTIL A POLITICAL SOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT COULD BE NEGOTIATED. THE SECRETARY WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT HE HAD WARNED THE SOVIETS TWICE IN RECENT DAYS OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE US VIEWED THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE AND OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DESIRE THAT THE SOVIETS AND THEIR ALLIES SHOW RESTRAINT. THE SOVIETS HAD REPLIED THAT NETO DENIED BOTH HAVING ANY ANGOLAN FORCES IN ZAIRE AND THE EXISTENCE OF SOVIET ARMS AND EQUIPMENT THERE AS WELL. IN SUBSTANCE, THE SOVIETS HAD CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD NO USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY.

7. VAN BELLINGHEN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE ZAIRIANS MIGHT USE THEIR MIRAGES TO ATTACK THE GULF OIL RIGS IN CABINDA, IF THE KATANGAN INCURSION THREATENS TO CUT OFF KINSHASA, AND THAT THERE ARE AMERICANS WHO MIGHT BE ON THOSE RIGS AT THE TIME OF SUCH AN ATTACK. HE ENDORSED STRONGLY THE IDEA OF HAVING BLACK AFRICAN STATES ASSIST MOBUTU, BUT HE EXPRESSED FEARS THAT THE PRESENCE OF WHITE MERCENARIES WOULD DRAW FIRST THE ANGOLANS AND THEN THE CUBANS INTO THE CONFLICT. HE ALSO SHOWED CONCERN THAT THE KATANGAN FORCES MIGHT CARRY OUT REPRISALS AGAINST BELGIAN /MISSIONARIES IN THE EASTERN CONGO, IF WHITE MERCENARIES BEGAN APPEARING IN THE SCENE.

8. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT HE WILL CONSULT WITH EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT AND FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY THIS WEEK ON THE ZAIRIAN SITUATION, SINCE THEY TOO ARE UNHAPPY AT THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. HE WOULD ALSO REMAIN IN

CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH AND KEY AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS,
ESPECIALLY NIGERIA AND AND ZAMBIA. THE SECRETARY ENDED BY
TELLING CAN ELSLANDE THAT WE WOULD SOON BE BACK IN TOUCH
WITH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT SO THAT WE COULD PURSUE OUR
CLOSE AND CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS ON THE SITUATION IN

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PAGE 05 SECTO 03108 022246Z

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